

Corpus Callosum, 2013

Einar and Jamex de la Torre

Public Art Installation, Floor 1, New Central Library, San Diego

Einar and Jamex de la Torre's site-specific art installation in the central elevator bay on the first floor of the New Central Library in downtown San Diego is titled *Corpus Callosum*. Completed in 2013, the four-part installation is an arrangement of oversized lenticular prints and stacked dioramas beckoning elevator riders into a wondrous trip of discovery within the library.

Flanked on both sides by the de la Torre's colorful lenticular prints back-lighted with LEDs, the centrally located elevator is a primary mode of transportation to all floors within the library. The concrete shaft, behind the transparent glass elevator, contains two 4' x 16' stacks of four metal-framed dioramas giving library patrons perception bending views into surreal and grotesque narratives as they ascend from the first to the second floor. The position and role of the elevator in the library's architecture is metaphorically referenced by the title of the artwork. *Corpus Callosum* is the Latin name for the bundle of fibers that connects the left/logical and right/creative cerebral hemispheres within the human brain. The corpus callosum facilitates communication between the brain's two hemispheres much like the elevator carries riders from floor to floor.

Linking two things is a major theme in the work of Einar and Jamex de la Torre who are brothers. Maintaining citizenship and residences in both Mexico and the United States, they are inspired by two cultures, two lifestyles and the physical act of crossing the border back and forth. Exploring the differences between ideas, places and objects exposes rich conceptual, aesthetic and physical layers that the de la Torre brothers depict in their art. The brothers are, however, quick to point out that trying to make sense, visually, of so many layers is no easy feat. Arranging the colors, patterns and shapes of their artworks to achieve the right composition while clearly conveying the concept is both the challenge and the fun, they say. "We use objects as a vocabulary and try to create a visual flow that tells a story and doesn't just exhaust the eye."*

As professional partners, the brothers gradually developed a working methodology where they each add to the other's work back and forth until a piece is complete. Einar confesses that he doesn't remember what aspects of each artwork Jamex has completed and which he has completed himself and keeping track of who does what is not the point. "It's not about doing it my way. It's about what we're doing together," said Einar. "We've learned that surrendering to the process of collaboration results in art where the whole is better than the sum of its parts," Jamex added.

The de la Torre brothers are internationally renowned for their work in blown and cast glass and *Corpus Callosum* is a reflection of their latest body of work, which incorporates lenticular prints.

The technology for producing lenticulars, which seem to expand, contract, wiggle and wink as the viewer moves, is not new. However, the combination of lenticular print technology with sophisticated, contemporary digital image manipulation is what fools the eye with the illusion of being 8-10 inches in depth. The de la Torre brothers have found that the warped glossiness of lenticular prints interplays perfectly with their handmade glass objects and they note that *Corpus Callosum* is their first public artwork that is an authentic extension of their studio work.

The imagery in *Corpus Callosum* depicts a wide range of themes, from technology to nature and architecture to literature. While the imagery may be a riotous blast of color and movement, the compositions contain narratives for viewers to interpret. Humor is always present in the work of the de la Torre brothers. Described by Einar as a “bait and switch,” the bizarre and funny images lead viewers to look once, look twice and eventually see meanings that go deeper than just one-liner jokes. And, that, say the brothers, is a process they want library patrons to experience again and again, each time anew, with repeated visits to the library and the de la Torre’s elevator ride. “We want people to see different things every time they come to the library. It’s a process of lateral discovery. You come to the library looking for one thing and find another. That takes you out of tunnel vision and helps you see things you wouldn’t have otherwise thought about.”

Corpus Callosum is the de la Torre’s fourth public art commission in San Diego, but one of only seven in the United States. “Our work is Baroque. It’s about richness and layering,” said Jamex. “What better place for our work than a library, a cathedral of learning and knowledge?” Einar added, “We’re honored to be included in this signature building which is changing San Diego’s skyline as well as its intellectual landscape. This is our home town and change is what our art is about.”

**All quotes from a July 29, 2013 interview with Dana Springs, Public Art Program Manager, City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture.*

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